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LETTERS TO GENERAL GREENE AND OTHERS

(Continued from the July number)

Annotated by JOSEPH W. BARNWELL

[JOHN LAURENS TO GEN. GREENE]¹

Dear General,

I yesterday had a satisfactory view of the Enemy's encampment on John's Island, and am inclined from its appearance to believe that their numbers do not exceed four hundred—accurate intelligence however on this head is expected every moment—they are posted with their rear to the river, their right supported by Gibbes' house, their left by a little skirt of wood and it is said they have the ditch and bank of an old inclosure, in front—beyond the main road and the extent of about half a mile of clear ground.

¹This letter refers to a proposed attack upon the British forces on Johns Island undertaken by Col. John Laurens and Col. Henry Lee ("Light Horse Harry") just before the meeting of the Legislature in 1782, generally known as the "Jacksonborough Assembly." It failed because one of the columns, commanded by Maj. James Hamilton of the Pennsylvania Line, lost its way owing to the darkness of the night and the desertion of its guide and no attack could be made. Maj. Hamilton was the father of Gov. James Hamilton of Nullification fame. He married a daughter of Thomas Lynch, Sr. and remained in South Carolina. The letter settles a controversy as to the true date of the expedition. Lee in his *Memoirs* (vol. 2, page 392) said December 21, 1781; Judge Johnson in his *Life of Greene* (vol. 2, page 279) said December 13, 1781; Lee's

Col. Lee and myself in consequence of the permission which you have been pleased to give us, have determined upon the enterprise—and make a preliminary move to-day, his command to Somer's and mine to Skirvins. I am in great hopes we shall be able to cross a detachment of Cavalry by swimming which will be infinitely useful to us—We are both of opinion that in order to guard against accidents, it will be advisable to arrive with your Army at the fording place at daylight on the morning of our crossing which we have fixed for Sunday next—if your support sh^d. be necessary—the consequences of reinforcements on both sides can only terminate in a general action, in which it appears to me that we shall have great advantage on ours—and to say the least of this disposition, I think it will exclude the possibility of any serious misfortune to us—any demonstrations that you sh^d. think proper to make towards Dorchester, by having a camp & Quarters marked, might serve to divide the Enemy's attention from the real object—your appearance there in person which w^d. be speedily reported in town w^d. be most likely to produce the desired effect—and you might easily overtake the troops afterwards on their march—

I am Dear General

Yours most affectionately

John Laurens.

Shubricks

11th. Jan^y. 1782.

Endorsed:

From Col^o. Laurens

Jan^y. 11th 1782.

son, Henry Lee in his *Campaign of 1781 in the Carolinas* (page 502) attacked the accuracy of Johnson by showing that letters of General Greene dated December 21, and 28, 1781, referred to the expedition as not yet having started. McCrady (*South Carolina in the Revolutionary War, 1781–1783*, page 505) mentions the controversy and decides in favor of Judge Johnson. This letter now shows that it was in January, 1782, not in December, 1781, that the attack was attempted. January 13, 1782, fell on Sunday. An unpublished letter in existence dated January 28, 1782, from Edward Rutledge to Arthur Middleton confirms this letter. It says: "about ten or twelve days ago Genl. Greene detached a part of his army to surprise the Post on Johns Island, but thro' the darkness of the night, the corps separated & were obliged to lay aside the scheme."

[THOMAS PINCKNEY TO GEN. GREENE]

Addressed:

The Hon^{ble} Major General Green
Commanding the Army of the
United States in the
Southern Department.

Fairfield Santee March 31st 1782

Sir—

I had the honor of addressing a Line to you on Thursday Morning last to inform you that Mr. Pendleton² & Maj^r. Hyrne³ had been captured & carried off by a Party of British Dragoons the preceeding morning, and that I had been left by them on Condition of obeying their Summons to deliver myself up if on their return to Town they should find I had been previously exchanged.⁴ This letter was intercepted by a British Party about 12 Miles from hence & tho' I know of nothing exceptionable in it they thought proper to destroy it & detain my servant: I have now therefore to repeat a Request which I made in it that you would be pleased to transmit to me an authentic Certificate that I was not exchanged on Friday last, or at least that no Certificate of my exchange had been received at Head Quarters or by the Commissary of Prisoners previous to that Day.

I have no doubt, Sir, that you will take such measures to procure the enlargement of the Gentlemen who have been made Prisoners as the Public Service & their particular situation (being in a bad state of Health) may require.

² Judge Henry Pendleton after whom the old Pendleton District (now Pickens, Oconee and Anderson Counties) was named.

³ Maj. Edward Hyrne, aide to General Greene. He was Commissary of Prisoners. An unpublished letter of Edward Rutledge to Arthur Middleton dated April 14, 1782, says: "I am sorry to tell you poor Pendleton as he was going Circuit a few days ago was taken prisoner and is in the Provost; Hyrne was also taken but met with very different treatment. He was treated with all possible civility and permitted to come out immediately on his parole."

⁴ Maj. Thomas Pinckney was captured at Camden in August, 1780, and his leg was very badly broken. It was supposed that he had been exchanged in 1781. (*Life of Gen. Thomas Pinckney*, by Rev. C. C. Pinckney, page 82). Heitman indeed says December, 1780, but this letter seems to show that he had not been exchanged in March, 1782.

M^r. and Miss Motte⁵ at whose House M^r. Pendleton was taken, were much insulted & plunder'd by the Party who went there. At M^r. D. Horry's⁶ where Major Hyrne & I were taken Major Frazer who commanded & the other officers, behaved with Politeness & made the Dragoons deliver up part of their Plunder & promised to procure the rest when more at leisure.

I am desired to render Compliments of Congratulations on the safe arrival of M^{rs}. Green from the Families at M^{rs}. Motte' & M^r. D. Horrys remain with sentiments of respectful esteem.

Sir

Your most obliged & obedient Serv^t.

Thomas Pinckney

Maj^r. 1st. Cont^l. Reg^t. S. C.

Maj^r. Gen^l. Greene.

Endorsed:

From Major Pinckney. March 31st. 1782.

[JOHN LAURENS TO GENERAL GREENE]

Addressed:

the honble

General Greene.

Dear General

If you will be pleased to order the select detachment to join this evening at the Cross Roads leading to New Dorchester—I am in hopes we shall be able to effect our intended passage and march—the men must have provisions cooked for tomorrow to be upon a par with us—if Major Eggleston can be ordered on the command with picked men it will facilitate our operations greatly.

No news from town, except that they kept themselves sober yesterday⁷—apprehensive that you might otherwise take advantage of their festivity—confirm the capture of Providence on the 10th May—

D^r. General Yours

John Laurens

⁵ Rebecca Motte, of "the Indian Arrows" story, widow of Jacob Motte and daughter of Robert Brewton. "Miss Motte" was Mary Motte afterwards wife of William Alston.

⁶ Daniel Horry married Harriott, the only sister of Thomas Pinckney.

5th June.

As I understand there is Rum in Store I will take the liberty of issuing my Comm^y. with returns for 1 gill $\frac{3}{4}$ man for the whole—relying upon your indulgence in granting an order for it.

Endorsed:

From Lt. Col. Laurens

June 5th 1782.

[MRS. ELIZABETH SINKLER: TO GEN. GREENE]

Addressed:

The Hon^{ble}. Maj^r. Gen^l. Greene

hon^d. by

Capt. Zeigler.

Sir,

The Care of a considerable Family & Estate devolved on me by the Death of M^r. Sinkler, who has fallen a victim in the present unhappy War, lays me under the necessity of making the present Application to you.

I know it to be the Duty of all to contribute as far as in their Power to the public assistance & perhaps the Supplies from few Estates in this Country have been greater than what have been furnished from this. The Quantity of Indigo taken one Way or another, has been forty Barrels; and upwards of six thousand Bushels of Provisions have been delivered for the use of the State since November last. Upon a late Occasion the provisions remaining were calculated by the Officers sent and the adjudged Surplus imprest for public Exigencies. Not content with this, another Forage Master by name Kelly has now thought proper to break open my Barn & take thereout five Waggon Loads more of the provisions assigned for plantation use.

I have therefore Reason to fear without your Interference by issuing positive Orders to the contrary or by other prohibitory

⁷ "Yesterday" was June 4 and the birthday of King George III, upon which no good Briton was expected to be sober.

⁸ Mrs. Sinkler was the widow of Peter Sinkler of "Lifeland" Plantation, St. Stephen's Parish, and daughter of Charles Cantey; (*This Magazine*, vol. xi, page 237). Peter Sinkler was a planter of large means and a staunch patriot. He died of typhus fever contracted as a prisoner in the old Post Office at Charleston. The plantation had been raided by the British (*DuBose, Reminiscences of St. Stephen's Parish*, Thomas' edition, page 47).

Methods which you may judge most effectual, that your Forage Masters induced by the Convenience of the place may occasion two hundred or more Lives to be left to perish whilst other plantations in the Neighborhood of only more difficult access have large Quantities of Provisions to spare & are unresorted to by them.

I am,

Sir with due Respect

Your most obedient

Eliz. Sinkler

Santee 22^d. June 1782.

The hon^{ble}. Maj^r. Gen^l. Greene.

Endorsed:

From M^{rs}. Sinkler

June 25th '82.

[HUGH RUTLEDGE⁹ TO GEN. GREENE]

Addressed:

The Honorable

Major General Greene.

Dear Sir—

There are now in the Port of George Town several vessels that have been taken from the Enemy & which can not be condemned or their cargoes disposed of unless I go there' for that Purpose but as the Road thither is by no means safe I am constrained to request the Favor of an Escort from you (if you can spare one about Tuesday next) to accompany me so far that I may be out of the Enemies reach.

I am D^r. Sir with the great respect and Esteem

Y^r. most obed^t. Serv^t.

Hugh Rutledge.

June 29, 1782

Endorsed:

From M^r. Hugh Rutledge

June 29th '82

Judge of the Admiralty of S. C.

⁹ Hugh Rutledge, a brother of John Rutledge, had been Speaker of the Jacksonborough House of Representatives, afterwards Chancellor of the Court of Equity.

[THOMAS MAYERS¹⁰ TO GEN. GREENE]*Addressed:*

To his Excellency
Major General Green

Excellent Sir.

I beg leave to inform you that I was in my Countrys Service with Gen^l. Marion and on the 25th, of February last we were surprised by a parcel of the British Horse at M^{rs}. Stedimans on Santee when and where It was my bad fortune to be taken Prisoner by them, and Ever Since Confined to a Close prison Ship which has caused me greatly to lose my Health. And understanding that my Brother Joseph Mayers is Prisoner to you and hearing no likelihood of an Exchange for the whole of us, I Humbly Pray that your Honour would Exchange my Brother for me if he is so attach'd to the British or if your Honour shall find to the Contrary and would Please to Exchange some other Prisoner for me I should always think nothing that I could do for your Honor to much for me to do. As it would release me out of my Confinement that I might avenge myself of wrongs done me by my Enemies and that I might be of Assistance to my Family that have Greatly suffered whilst I have been absent from them.

I am Your Honours

July the 10th Day 1782.

most obed^t & very Hum^e. Ser^t.

Thomas Mayers

*Endorsed:*From M^r. Thomas Mayers

July 10th 1782.

[GOV. JOHN RUTLEDGE TO GEN. GREENE]¹¹*Addressed:*

The Honble Major General Greene—

M^{rs}. Mottes Thur^{dy}. Morn^g.D^r. Sir

I arrived, Yesterday, at this place, about three Hours after you left it, & am sorry, that I did not come in time to have the pleasure of meeting you.

¹⁰ There was a very respectable family of this name in South Carolina at this time, but there is nothing to show that the writer of this letter was one of its members.

¹¹ An important letter in one particular at least. "Harden" to whom it

I wish you w^d. send up 6 or 7 of the Militia Horse or State Troops, for the purpose of carrying any dispatches which I may have occasion to send, about the country—I am told Hardens Regiment, & the two other Southward Regiments, formerly Gardens & Hegers, contain about 800 men who might be brought into Service, but, Harden, who is a very worthy brave Man, keeps up no discipline or Authority over them—he just lets 'em do as they please—would it not be well to order Pickens, to draw off some (about 300 of 'em) & either keep 'em in the Field with you, or, put 'em with Marion, who w^d. manage 'em much better than Harden did, or ever will—and prevent them going into the Enemy, as Several, (who I really did not expect would do so,) of Hardens Men have lately done. I understand that if those Regiments had done their Duty, Marion would have made the late affair wth Major Fraser a very compleat one—I propose staying here, until I hear from you, where you w^d. recommend that I sh^d. remain—I wish to be nearer to you, but, in the present state of things, & untill I hear from you, I think I can^t. take up my Abode so well any where as here—I shall expect the pleasure of a Line from you, whenever any thing material occurs, & Leisure will admit of your writing.

I am with the greatest Esteem & Regard

D^r Sir

Y. most obd. Serv^t.

J: Rutledge.

Gen. Greene.

Endorsed:

From Gov^r. Rutledge

6th Sep^r. 1782.

refers was Col. William Harden, a very brave and energetic officer, who did a great deal to keep alive the spirit of the Patriots in the country between the Cooper River and the Savannah. When a Brigadier General was appointed for this district, it was thought by some (Johnson's *Life of Greene*), that Harden should not have been passed over. If, however, Governor Rutledge had the opinion which he expresses in this letter of the failure to enforce discipline on the part of Harden, it assigns reasons which have never before come to light.

[COUNT KOSCIUSZKO TO GEN. GREENE]

Addressed:

The Honorable Major
General Greene.

Sir

The British pay'd me great honor today in the afternoon they parad all guards that are at Works in the whole Island and stayed till they lost the wue of me they fir'd Alarm Gun with the Shot wich very near it was to heat one Gentilman who was with me—at the landing I saw two boats Going to Town intermist with two Small Shloops, wich were loaded some with the British and some with different persons but stop'd at my aproch, On the Shore was great many men, and more british than the others higher up at the Bloff upon the right of the Hessien Redoubt I saw nine small vessels with about the same number of Boats, on the Shore was about twenty Barels and some Baggage After the Gun fire as the men were paraded, I saw two Officers Galoping from one Work to the other and immediately the number of Men that were paraded diminished Considerably I saw going by smal partys after back ward forward till I left the place by this manuevre of the Ennemys I think they have in vue to Evacuat the Island this night if I am not mistaken as the men had their Napsaks very heavy loaded every one I saw at the dock the boats were Coming from the Town very fast I counted Six that I could distinguish upon the river, in Side of the Island I could see but few men I send you a letter from the Gentilman that came with the Flag which he begs for an Answer

I am Sir with perfect

respect your most Humble

and most obe^t. ServantThad. Kosciuszko¹²3rd Octob.*Endorsed:*From Col^o. Kosciuszko.

October 3, 1782

¹² Appointed Engineer in the Service of the United States with rank of Colonel, by Congress October 18, 1776 (*Journals Continental Congress*, vol. 6, page 888), and Brevet Brigadier-General October 13, 1783 (Heitman, page 254); served with Greene on his Southern Campaign.

[CHARLES COTESWORTH PINCKNEY TO GENERAL GREENE]

Ashley River Oct: 21, 1782.

Dear General,

Agreeable to your desire I enclose you my opinion on the Questions proposed to the Council of officers, and I have assigned my reasons pretty much at large out of respect due to the sentiments of Gentlemen, whose characters I highly regard, but from whose opinion in the present Instance it is my misfortune to dissent, and in order to convince you, and those before whom the proceedings of the Council may be laid, that I do not differ out of an obstinate captiousness, and on light grounds, but for reasons which appear to me weighty and important. Be assured I remain with unfeigned regard & esteem.

Your most Obed^t. H^ble. Serv^t,
Charles Cotesworth Pinckney.

General Greene.

Endorsed:
From Col^o. Pinckney
Oct. 21st. 1782.

[LACHLAN MCINTOSH TO GEN. GREENE]

Addressed:

Hon^{bl}.
Major General Greene
Commanding the Southern Army.
Headquarters
S^o. Carolina

Favored by }
Doctor Houstoun }

Dear General

When I came down to Savannah I was happy to be informed by Governor Martin of our State, that he & Gov^r. Tonyn of East Florida had agreed to discountenance, and as far as in their power to put a stop to all plundering for the future, beyond their respective Limits—which has grown to such a Hight, by a Lawless, Savage and unprincipled Banditti, that no Man is Safe one

Night in His House in any part of this State travelling a Mile upon the Roads, or even in the Town of Savannah, and has been a great injury & disgrace to the general Cause, and nearly depopulated & ruined this fine Country—but I am apt to think an affair which happened some days past, & raised a general Clamour & Resentment here, will break this agreement off, unless a timely remedy is apply'd.

One Andrew D'veaux late of S^o. Carolina it is said, has fitted out some Armed Boats in Charlestons—came inland with them from East Florida, plundering Plantations in his way along, & among others, took a Boat Seven Negroes & some Household Furniture belonging to my Brother Col^o. W^m. McIntosh, and afterwards landed at Beveley [?], twelve Miles from Savannah & carryed off thirty negroes & some other effects belonging to M^{rs}. Morrel.—our Governor has wrote to Gov. Tonym by a flagg upon the Occasion to have them Restored, in case they are gone to Augustine—but it is thought as this Deveaux is Commishioned from Charlestown, that he will pay no regard to the authority of Gov^r. Tonym—and in that case that an appreciation from you to Gen^l. Lesley upon the subject will be necessary, and if you think there is no impropriety in it, I am desired to Request that you will do it.

I have the Honor to be with the greatest Respect Dear General

Your most Ob^t. Hb^l. Serv^t,

Lachⁿ. McIntosh¹³

Savannah 30th October 1782

Hon^{le}.

Major General Green.

P. S. I begg leave to introduce the bearer James Houstoun of this State, to your acquaintance, he is one of the Surgeons General to the Southern Army, is a prisoner on parole since the Capture of Charlestown, and very anxious to be Exchanged if possible.

Endorsed:

From Col^o. McIntosh

Oct^r. 30th. '82.

¹³ Lachlan McIntosh, the son of John Mor McIntosh, a Scotchman who came over to Georgia with Oglethorpe. He was said to have been in Charleston in his youth in a business connection with the Laurens family. He was a steady patriot during the Revolution and was a Brigadier General in the Continental Army.

[The letter from General Sumter to General Greene dated January 29, 1781, published in the last issue of this *Magazine*, page 97, is in reply to the letter of General Greene to him of January 8, 15 and 19, 1781, printed in the *Charleston Year Book* of 1899 (Appendix, page 79). It fills an important gap in the correspondence of the two officers for it shows that Sumter was irritated by expressions in the letters of General Greene, and considered them as criticising his course. No charge of insincerity on the part of General Greene because he criticised Sumter in his letters to others and not in those to him can therefore fairly be made up to this time for his letters to Sumter were evidently considered by Sumter himself as criticisms of his course.]

(*To be continued.*)